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ABSTRACT

An assessment of the usefulness of case records in contributing practical information for improved administrator effectiveness, with a focus on the development of performance evaluation criteria, is the purpose of this study. Forty-two case records were classified according to content and outcome, and further classified as successful or unsuccessful. Patterns of administrative behavior were analyzed on the basis of control relationships, communication styles, and utilization of structural or human resources in problem resolution. Successful cases were characterized by shared responsibility, participative decision making, and utilization of structural and human resources. Unsuccessful cases featured less communication and decision making based on structural considerations. The cases illustrate the importance of collaboration, communication, and attention to personal issues in problem solving. Finally, the findings demonstrate that case records are useful in developing performance criteria, establishing a link between theory and practice, illustrating theoretical concepts, and defining a new role for practitioners as research contributors generating new "knowledge-in-action." (14 references) (LMI)

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Lessons from Practice:

Building a Knowledge Base from Experience

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Lessons from Practice: Building a Knowledge Base from Experience

Research Question

This study addresses the following questions: Do case records provide information which significantly enhances the knowledge base in educational administration in ways which will improve administrative behavior? And, specifically, are case records useful in developing standards and criteria for effective performance?

Conceptual Framework

Educational research has been widely criticized during the last decade for its inability to develop a knowledge base which "provides standards and criteria for effective performance" (Goldhammer, cited in Crowson &McPherson, 1987, p. 48). Proponents of change have discussed the need to bridge the gap between theory and practice and advocated the need to enable practitioners to contribute their experiential knowledge as a means toward developing a better understanding of the problems of practice and a theoretical base which is more relevant to practitioners. The case record, a structured approach to reflection which encourages the respondent to systematically describe the decision process which evolved in response to a problem of practice, is one source of information about problems of practice and administrative responses to these problems. Theoretically, it has been proposed that the case record yields information which expands our knowledge of problems of practice and provides guidelines to improve the effectiveness of administrative behavior (Silver, 1987); but, as yet, the value of this approach has yet to be demonstrated in any substantive way.

An earlier exploratory analysis of case records (Osterman, 1989) suggested that

successful/unsuccessful strategies differed on three important dimensions: control relationships in the problem-solving process, communication patterns, and emphasis on human resource components of problems as well as structural aspects. In these cases, successful administrators appeared to adopt Model II behavior (Argyris & Schon, 1974). They share control, they maximize the information available to all of the parties, they seek win/win solutions in which all participants experience psychological success. They utilize strategies which recognize the needs of others to exercise personal causation and seek consensus decisions. These preliminary observations about control relationships, communication patterns, and attention to structural and human resource considerations, provided the framework for this analysis.

Methodology

As an initial effort to respond to these questions, a sample of case records submitted to the Silver Center was selected for an exploratory analysis. The case record is a structured approach to reflection which, through a series of questions, encourages the respondent to systematically review the decision process initiated in response to a particular problem. These questions ask the respondent 1) to describe the problem, 2) to identify the intended outcomes or objectives, and 3) to outline the alternative strategies considered. With this overview of the planning phases of the decision process, the respondent is then asked to describe 4) what was done and 5) the result of those actions; and 6) to assess the effectiveness of these actions in achieving the stated objectives identifying critical events, decisions or situations which influenced the outcomes. Further reflections are also invited.

In sum, then, the case record provides information on each stage of the decision process: planning, decision, implementation and assessment. It enables us to examine cognitive and conceptual dimensions of the planning process as well as the more tangible aspects. It enables us to review not only behaviors but also intentions. Although the information presented is

subjective and represents only one individual's perspective, one might argue that these subjective aspects of decision making are essential to administration. (Osterman, 1990).

The Sample

The sample includes 42 case records selected from a total of 87 cases. Of these, 28 were excluded because they were incomplete: that is, in progress or lacking enough detail to be able to obtain a clear picture of the problem as well as the responses to the problem.

The case records are classified on the basis of content and outcome. Management and Organization refers to those cases dealing with policy, practice, and procedures. Cases in this category focus on problems such as unanticipated impact of a new student disciplinary policy, faculty dissatisfaction with a building repair schedule, and an honor student's failure to complete diploma requirements. Personnel refers to those problems which occur between or among staff members which are not necessarily related to the quality of work performance, for example, interpersonal conflict or health problems. Supervision includes those cases which deal with quality of work performance on the part of a teacher or other staff member and range from problems with teacher burnout to problems with the building custodians. Student Behavior includes cases in which the presenting problem is inappropriate student behavior. Cases in this category, for example, include incidents of vandalism, conflict between students on or off school property, and classroom disruption.

Curriculum & Instruction includes cases in which central issue is the quality of curriculum or instruction, for example, the need to develop an individualized program for a student with special needs. Community Relations cases are those in which problems predominantly involve individuals or groups outside of the school, for example, cases prompted by a student's arrest for rape, a custody conflict between divorced parents, and parental child abuse.

Of the 42 cases in the sample, 13 addressed problems of Management and Organization; 10, Personnel; 7, Supervision; and 12, Student Behavior. Seventeen cases addressing problems classified as Curriculum & Instruction and Community Relations were excluded.

A brief summary outlining the problem, the strategy, the outcome, and pertinent reflections was prepared for each complete case.The preliminary review suggested that success in the cases dealing with curriculum and instruction and community relations problems was unrelated to strategy as much as to context, that situational or contextual variables played a more significant role in determining the outcome than the actions of the administrator. In the category of Community relations, for example, it appeared that the success or failure of a specific strategy was more dependent on factors which were outside the control or influence of the administrator. In the Curriculum & Instruction category, there were similar issues. Almost without exception, the problems in this category were instigated by a parent complaint about the quality of instruction; and typically, the response was designed to satisfy the parent but seldom led to any change in the instructional process. Successful outcomes in these cases, as in the community relations cases, depended on factors other than the actions of the administrator, particularly the availability of instructional alternatives.

Cases in which the intended outcome was achieved as a result of the actions taken were classified as successful. Cases in which the intended outcome was not achieved were classified as unsuccessful or partially successful. As Table 1 indicates, 22 of the cases were successful and 20 were unsuccessful or partially successful.

The Silver Center case records are prepared by school personnel: principals, assistant principals, department chairpersons or other supervisory personnel. In this sample, 20 of the case records were prepared by principals, 6 by assistant principals, 11 by other building level administrators, and 5 by teachers . Eighteen address problems at the high school level, 6 at the

intermediate, and 16 at the elementary level. Two were not identified by level.

Table 1: Distribution of case records by content and outcome.

	Successful	Unsuccessful/Partial	Total
Management and Organization	6	7	13
Personnel	6	4	10
Student Behavior	8	4	12
Supervision	2	5	7
Total	22	20	42

Analysis

Each of the 42 cases was then analyzed to identify recurring themes or patterns of administrative behavior which affected the outcome with specific attention to control relationships, communication patterns, and relative attention to structural and human resource considerations.

Findings

The analysis of the cases demonstrated that there were observable differences in the administrative strategies employed in successful and unsuccessful or partially successful cases. Those differences are discussed here and illustrated with reference to specific cases.

Successful Strategies

Control. In successful cases, the responsibility for solving the problem was shared with those who were involved in the problem. The problems were raised openly and the planning process was a collaborative effort. An intern, observing a problem in getting elementary children safely and smoothly into the auditorium, "introduced the need for a safe procedure" at a

faculty meeting and opened a brainstorming session. Everyone agreed that a procedure was needed and a safe plan was formulated. the respondent concluded that "involving the teachers in the planning stages helped in getting their cooperation." The new plan was safe, fully accepted, and reduced delays. (37)

In resolving a dispute between two elementary children, the assistant principal involved both in developing a plan and follow-up procedures and reported that "having the children feel like they were the decision-makers helped that plan to be successful" (8). Similar strategies were reported in cases involving vandalism and substance abuse at high school social events. In one case, the principal asked the students to brainstorm ways to prevent a recurrence of misbehavior and vandalism reflected that requiring students to assume ownership for the success of the concert, as well as involving "key" teachers in the planning helped (1). In the other, the principal, hoping to promote "community ownership," decided to ask a broad-based committee to develop a drug abuse policy(35). An elementary principal confronted with a constantly disruptive, aggressive, and totally defiant student, engages in a series of actions including conferences to engage the student in developing a response to the problem (78).

This involvement appears to affect the nature of the outcome in several ways: it increases the amount of information available on which to base the decision, and increases consensus and commitment among the participants. As one respondent reported, a plan developed to address problems in working relationships among team members "worked because each individual had input in the consensus building process"(62).

Communication. In the successful cases, the process of communication is open and unrestricted. Information about the problem is shared openly and equally with those involved, and the problem is clearly defined as a means of engendering a shared understanding of the problem, not to place blame.

In a typical supervisory confrontation between a department chair and an experienced but burned-out colleague, for example, the chair cites specific instances to document his concerns about the teacher's performance(4); the Director of Athletics presents a critical evaluation to justify a coach's reassignment (47); a teacher decides to approach the other person directly to discuss an angry encounter (5); a teacher, resentful of a packaged curriculum and the loss of professional input, asks for a meeting with the supervisor to present the problem(25); principals bring together upset teachers to discuss the specific problem (51, 62, 75); principals confront students with evidence of misbehavior (1, 28, 40).

In each of these cases, the respondent's action illustrated Theory Y assumptions. The person in charge typically presented the information openly and directly to the person(s) involved, in a non-defensive manner, and conveyed the expectation that the person(s) were responsible for their own behavior and capable of making necessary changes. The person(s) involved were able, as a result of the informative but non-judgmental approach, able to accept the validity of the problem and become active participants in the solution. The director of athletics reported, for example, that "we came to an understanding of the expectations for the program." (47) The teacher confided his feelings of frustration, non-commitment, and burnout. (4) The boys were relieved to be able to return to sports after a suspension and complied fully with behavioral requirements completing the season without trouble(28). Brought to a common meeting (parents, teacher, administrator, social worker, support personnel) to respond to a teacher's concern about a student's suicidal comments, "Everyone who had dealings with John became aware of his problem. His parents were finally convinced that both they and John needed help. The social worker started to see John more frequently" (38). When dealing with interpersonal problems among team members, the principal reported that identifying (naming) the problem enabled members to focus on the problems and establish alternatives (75).

Problem Perspective. Using Bolman and Deal's (1986) distinctions, successful cases analyzed and addressed problems through structural and human resource frames. In the problem-solving process, successful administrators examined the structural dimensions of problems and utilized structural and rational strategies. They documented problems, developed policies, changed schedules, clarified work roles. Case 22, for example, describes the successful efforts of a principal to convince the central office to purchase a new copy machine. By keeping very systematic records, he clearly documented the inefficiency which had created consternation for the principal with teachers and parent groups . In another, a systematic review of cafeteria seating needs led to the purchase of additional tables. (59). Preparing formal reports outlining staff needs and responsibilities, a principal successfully resisted a district decision to transfer a needed staff member (66). In each of these cases, a structural approach led to a structural change which was an appropriate and satisfactory resolution of the presenting problem.

While the structural frame focuses on the organization and the job, the human resource frame focuses on the employee as a person. This perspective which emphasizes the importance of identifying and responding to individual needs as a basis for resolving problems was evident in successful cases. In successful cases, administrators attended to the structural issues but they also viewed problems through the human resource frame and attended to feelings and emotions of the participants as appropriate. The administrators recognized the importance of different perspectives and approached problems with a sense of inquiry. They asked questions and listen as a means of understanding the other's perspective. A principal meets with a potential drop-out to discuss the student's perception of what was going on in the classroom (58); an intern meets with fighting students to find out "what usually happened when they got on the bus each day" (8).

The administrators entered the situation recognizing that underlying feelings were an important component of the problem which needed to be addressed, that structural solutions were

not adequate if the underlying personal issues were not addressed. A principal recognized the importance of enabling the group to feel good and helped the members focus on strengths as well as the problems. "By the end of the meeting, the chair and team apologized and the group left with good feelings" (75). As part of successful effort to retain a staff member, the principal outlined the critical nature of each person's job. As a result " morale was boosted because the teachers and chair know they are viewed as important" (66).

Recognizing the importance of the human resource issues, the administrators also place a greater emphasis on the need for consensus and accept the legitimacy of confrontation and conflict as a means toward that end. In one case, the principal, recognizing that teachers feel "overwhelmed with extra requirements" and that this has caused problems in working relationships, called a meeting. At the meeting the principal "listened to the teachers and worked out a compromise that was acceptable to all. " As a result, the teachers' work load was reduced; everyone "saved face", and teachers' attitudes improved. The principal reported that this process led to a change in perceptions of the faculty: "they felt that they could have input, that someone would listen." (51)

In each of these cases, the administrator chose action strategies which recognized the importance of their feelings. At the same time, these actions conveyed a sense of respect for the other's ability and willingness to exercise personal control within the organization. As a result, each person experienced psychological success even though, or perhaps because they were required to confront problems and personal inadequacies, make adjustments in their own behavior, and suffer consequences of prior actions.

Unsuccessful Strategies

In the unsuccessful cases, administrative behavior differs on each of these dimensions, but, the emphasis on control and structural issues seem to dominate the process and directly impact upon

the communication patterns.

Control. In the unsuccessful cases, responsibility is divided rather than shared. There is a lack of communication and collaboration among those involved in the problem with one or more parties being excluded from the decision process or involved in only a peripheral way.

In some cases, the administrator assumes personal responsibility for defining and solving the problem and excludes others until the decision has been made. A top-down district decision to proceed with building repairs during the school year, for example, created a political crisis because teachers' valid concerns regarding health and safety were not considered. In the bitter dispute which followed, the teachers obtained information which confirmed the legitimacy of their concerns and, eventually, a compromise plan was developed (13). An administrator unilaterally changed an attendance procedure to meet identified problems and created new, unanticipated problems which were more troublesome for teachers. Subsequent involvement of teachers in the decision process produced a new plan which was satisfactory to all(20). In another case, the Physical education chair modified the schedule to reduce class size without involving the other teachers or members of the guidance department. Being unaware of the problem behind the changes, the guidance staff approved schedule changes and the teachers admitted students, thereby foiling the plan(11). The central administration hired an outside contractor to provide custodial services. The plan, developed without the involvement of principals or custodians, created staff problems at the building level(85). A principal concerned about negative attitude among high school students develops an after school program without input from staff or students and reports that while the plan had some effective moments "students were not convinced that they were not being punished and did not want to return after 1 or 2 visits" (86).

Cases in which the administrator turned the decision process over to teachers and did not

themselves actively participate in the decision process were not necessarily more successful.

Attempts to implement a disciplinary policy created problems for students, teachers, parents and administrators. The plan had been developed by "a small group of teachers" with no administrative input. "Not all teachers agree with the approach. It may have looked like there was consensus but there was no open communication about the problem. The plan was developed out of anger toward the administrators" (7). In another case, the department chair approved the establishment of a teacher committee intent on improving special education testing procedures. The teachers devoted a great deal of time and effort, meeting with school personnel and representatives from publishing companies. " The chairman let the committee meet, make decisions and do a lot of leg work. Then he made the (final) decision based on his own opinion" (23).

Case 11 is a similar situation where the principal had delegated the responsibility to resolve a problem and then failed to provide the support necessary to make the plan work. In case 14, a principal ignored concerns of the faculty about an attendance problem until they threatened to go to the community; and then, as did the principal in case 23, rejected the input of a teacher committee which had met regularly and substituted his own plan.

In response to parental pressure, a principal makes a last minute decision to reverse a prior decision which had been made with staff input and approval. Lacking information to which his staff had access, he made an unnecessary decision which created serious morale problems among staff and students and led to the loss of his job(9).

A principal follows standard procedures and finds that his choice for guidance counselor is rejected for arbitrary reasons. Although ultimately successful, the principal reflects that "It's just pathetic about the time that was put into a task that apparently was not necessary."

In these cases, the decisions to withdraw control, to disregard the involvement or concerns

of the staff, resulted in demoralization, alienation, and frustration among staff members and created antagonism and divisiveness between teachers and administrators. In case 23, for example, the respondent reported that because of this experience she would be "hesitant to become involved with any committee." In case 14, the teachers' experience - the reluctance of the principal to address the teachers' concerns and the principal's rejection of their efforts to develop a solution - led them to conclude that concerted and organized pressure was a more effective strategy than cooperation. The decision in Case 9 also created an impact " far greater than the principal anticipated. Faculty members did not want to go out on a limb for anything feeling they could receive no support; and the students were generally more belligerent and defiant than ever."

Problem Perspective. Unsuccessful strategies tend to emphasize structural issues and neglect human resource issues often with a devastating impact on morale. Using Bolman and Deal's distinctions between structural and human resource frames (1986), unsuccessful cases incorporate a predominantly structural frame, an impersonal approach which focuses on the organization and the job rather than the employee as a person. Within this frame, it is assumed that task and socio-emotional aspects of the problem-solving process can be separated and that task issues take precedence over socio-emotional issues concerns. The decision process focuses on rules, regulations, policies, procedures, aspects of work decision, and authority relationships; but, unlike the successful cases, personal and emotional aspects of the problem are ignored, often with a devastating impact on morale. As in the above cases, in response to perceived organizational needs or constraints, decisions are made which subordinate personal needs to organizational needs and disregard opposing views, feelings, and needs of organizational members. The following cases illustrate the relationship between this dominant emphasis on structural issues and the nature of communication in the decision process.

Communication . In contrast with the successful cases in which problems are openly confronted, in unsuccessful cases, the discussion of the problem is often circumspect. Problems are not openly explored; they are not confronted directly. Real issues are masked or hidden to prevent conflict, to protect feelings or in response to one's own perceived powerlessness. Information is not shared openly among the participants; and plans are developed to circumvent rather than resolve underlying issues. The following cases illustrate the way in which socio-emotional issues are excluded from the agenda and the way in which this occlusion of issues limits the opportunity to develop a shared understanding of the problem, reduces the likelihood of coordinated and cooperative efforts to resolve the specific problem, and generates negative feelings and actions.

In one case, the special education team was aware that mainstream teachers were having difficulty with discipline. They devised a variety of strategies (aides, abbreviated classes) which took the disciplinary responsibilities away from the mainstream teachers rather than address the underlying problem. In the end, the special education teachers had to arrange their schedule so that they could accompany their students to each of the mainstream classes(30). The mainstream teachers were excluded from the discussion and the solution.

An assistant principal, asked to act as an arbiter in a conflict between the department chair and a senior teacher, decides to isolate the teacher from the chair rather than address long-standing bitterness between the two, rationalizing that "Neither person was willing to or capable of sitting down and working things out" (6).

In a supervisory case, the problem was viewed strictly in structural terms with no attention to human resource considerations. The unilateral decision to replace the newly appointed, highly enthusiastic administrator who was experiencing difficulties with the new leadership responsibilities, resolved one problem but created another. "The administrative

tasks are now being performed satisfactorily. However, the teacher (who was demoted) is now continually in very subtle and not too subtle ways attempting to undermine the new person and the program. The rest of the staff have partially isolated the teacher...The plan has partially worked. however, the human relations of this teacher still affects the operation of the program and the community's perception of the program. "

A building principal, upset at the quality of services provided by a central contracting agency, broaches the issue indirectly (asking why there was no external evaluation process in place). When told that the agency would do its own evaluation, he decides to take no further action and concludes that he would keep his mouth shut next time because he got "branded as one who was trying to sabotage the operation" (80).

A teacher, embroiled in a grievance procedure, is confronted by resistance from the person she sought successfully to replace. Now the department coordinator, she decides not to meet directly with Mr. X but to hold a department meeting focused on scheduling issues. The meeting led to a resolution of the scheduling issues; but the central problem, the conflict between the new and deposed coordinator, was not addressed and the meeting concluded with Mr. X's angry outburst and departure(87).

In each of these cases, either because because the real nature of the problem was masked or ignored, or because participants were not fully informed, there is a lack of consensus on the nature and implications of the problem, a lack of commitment to the proposed plan, and, overt and covert resistance. As one respondent described the issue: "Some people win and some lose. Despite their best efforts to resolve their problems, when others don't share their concerns and are working to satisfy their own special interests, there's no possibility for a win/win solution" (11).

Summary of Findings

In successful cases, typically, responsibility for problem-solving was shared. The decision process was characterized by participation, open communication about structural and emotional dimensions of the problem , cooperation among those involved, and consensus about the nature of the problem and its importance. Those involved in the problem were brought together to share in its resolution; communication was direct, openly focused on the problem, confrontational but non-threatening; and the relationships among those involved were cooperative and supportive rather than adversarial. The problem-solving process focused on structural as well as human resource considerations and the decisions, successfully implemented, were consensus decisions, win/win decisions, which responded both to personal and organizational needs.

In unsuccessful cases, in contrast, the decision process tended to follow a more traditional organizational pattern with responsibility divided rather than shared. The decision process was less representative; and the communication patterns were more restricted: plans were developed without obtaining or using the input from those affected and discussion about the problem was restricted and circumspect. Less information was available, fewer persons had access to information, and not everyone had access to the same information. The decision process focused primarily on organizational issues while underlying personal issues, dissenting points of view, or other information which might create conflict were suppressed and neglected. The decision strategies which emerged were primarily structural and ignored personal needs; changes were implemented in the absence of consensus about the nature and significance of the problem or the solution, frequently generating feelings of betrayal and powerlessness as well as "anger", "outrage", "belligerence", and "defiance."

Discussion

Argyris and Schon (1974) described what they perceived to be a prevailing theory-in-use in our institutions and organizations. Within this model, Model I, the actor perceives need to be in control and tries to design, manage and lead the system toward an identified goal. Toward this end, the actor defines the problem, often in structural terms, from the perspective of the organization, and in doing so, ignores personal emotions, feelings, or needs. Compliance is viewed as an acceptable outcome and consequently, win/lose decisions are acceptable. Given these assumptions, the decision process, and particularly the communication process, is controlled by the actor who determines what information will be shared and who will receive it. With an emphasis on system maintenance rather than problem resolution, the flow of information is restricted as a way of insuring the "rationality of the process' and minimizing opportunities for confrontation and conflict. Argyris and Schon propose that these strategies have negative consequences: the attempt to exercise or maintain control by choosing a highly rational process basically excludes the other participant(s) as individuals, and limits their ability to participate effectively in the decision process or to share in determining their own fate. By diminishing their sense of personal control within the organization, the authors propose that the strategies generate defensive relationships and dependence on the part of the subordinates; mistrust; conformity; and low freedom of choice, internal commitment, or risk-taking.

In contrast, they identify Model II as an alternative, and superior, strategy. In this model, the actor seeks to design situations where participants can be origins and experience high personal causation. If "all participants are to experience free choice in and internal commitment to the situation" (1974, p. 88), the authors propose that control over any task must be shared or controlled jointly, and that access to information is inherent to personal

control. The action strategies consistent with these assumptions: sharing control and responsibility and maximizing information, should theoretically result in effective problem-solving as well as a positive environment characterized by collaboration and trust.

If this theoretical argument is valid, the outcomes of those cases which illustrate Model I and Model II theories-in-use should be noticeably different; and, in this study, they are. Model II strategies: shared control, access to information, and a decision process which attends to structural and human resource needs, generate consensus, commitment, cooperation, and collaboration. Model II strategies lead to effective problem-solving. Model I strategies, in contrast, are more uni-dimensional: structural considerations dominate the decision process. The corresponding action strategies reflect traditional assumptions regarding hierarchical control and vertical communication and are associated with the type of outcomes which Argyris and Schon predicted: hostility, defensiveness, dependence, mistrust, and lack of internal commitment.

This analysis of the case records also illustrates the importance of communication and collaboration in problem solving and, again, corroborates theories which are central to the field of educational administration. Successful administrators, for example, recognized the relationship between participation, information and decision-acceptance (Vroom & Yetton, 1973) and utilized the criteria of relevance and expertise (Bridges, 1967) to bring people into the decision process. Within the decision process, communication was open and problems were directly confronted. Because the communication process was open and typically involved more people, the administrators had access to more information. Having more and better information, the administrators avoided unnecessary mistakes, but more importantly, the open communication process appeared to be an important in establishing consensus. This shared and common understanding of the problem, in turn, appeared to establish a basis for cooperative

problem-solving.

The case records also supports Leavitt's findings (1951) that some communication patterns are more effective than others. Specifically, the cases illustrate the comparative advantage of the circle pattern of communication for decision-making. In successful cases, participants were brought together to discuss problems and therefore had equal access to information. In contrast, the unsuccessful cases seemed to utilize "chain" or "wheel" patterns with the flow of information being controlled by one person or being passed from person to person. One respondent's analysis of a problem illustrates this point: A teen parent in a special program was observed "baiting and teasing her 1 year old". The teacher spoke to the parent and then spoke to the social worker. She relayed the problem to the social work intern who then called the teen parent from class to counsel her. The intern 's approach angered the student who then dropped out. As the respondent reflected: "The chief critical event was the haphazard lines of communication... None of us took the time to clearly define our concerns and course of action. Better communication among the three of us would have helped us to agree on the course of action to be taken. People involved need to make sure that everyone is understanding what is being said. 'This is what I hear you saying, am I right?' and 'This is what I will do, what will you do?'" (21)

These cases illustrate another basic and widely espoused belief originating in the work of Robert Bales (1950): that task objectives are seldom achieved unless socio-emotional issues are also addressed. While structural solutions were often highly successful in resolving problems, including human resource problems, when feelings of people were ignored in favor of structural considerations, strategies failed. Restricted communication, protecting people's feelings, appeared to have a more negative impact than openly discussing interpersonal problems; and ignoring the input of subordinates who have been involved in the decision process

is perhaps even worse in its psychological effects than excluding people from the decision process altogether. Administrators who recognized the importance of the human resource issues, also recognized the importance of consensus and legitimacy of confrontation and conflict as a means toward that end.

Conclusions

This study posed two questions: The first focuses on the potential contribution of case records to the profession as a whole. The second focuses on the value of these case records as a source of information to guide administrative practice.

From the study, we could conclude that the information provided by case records would seem to be of value for the practitioner as well as for the profession as a whole for several reasons. First, case records provide information and evidence which is useful in developing standards and criteria for effective performance. As samples of administrative behavior, the case records enable us to identify patterns of behavior which facilitate or prevent the resolution of common, recurring problems which confront teachers and administrators in schools.

Their most important contribution, however, may not be as a source of new information or ideas, but as a means to establish a linkage between theory and action. From the standpoint of practice, information alone is not sufficient to impact upon practice. In the history of intellectual thought there are few truly new ideas; but there are many valuable ideas and much information which have yet to reshape our traditional patterns of behavior.

While the information which the case records provide may not necessarily be "new" knowledge, it is knowledge in a different form, a form which may be particularly important for the profession. As samples of behavior, the case records illustrate behavior; they serve as a record of what was done. As samples of behavior which incorporate intention as well as action, motivation as well as outcomes, the case records also enable us to explore the theories-in-use

(Argyris &Schon, 1974) which influence behavior. Awareness of behavior, and particularly awareness of the contradictions between our espoused theory and our theory-in-use, is an essential precondition of behavioral change (Kolb, 1984).

The case records also illustrate theoretical concepts in behavior and experiential terms. This study, for example, used the case records to explore the interplay between theory and practice. Argyris and Schon proposed that Model I is a prevailing theory-in-use in our institutions and organizations. These cases discussed here support the proposition that Model I assumptions do influence action strategies and document the negative impact which result. Rooted in personal experience, generated by practitioners in the school context, and described in "every day" language, this information may have more legitimacy than that which is generated or developed in a more abstract fashion by non-practitioners and more convincingly demonstrate the importance of these theoretical issues for practice (Griffiths, 1979). This realization, in turn, could be the stimulus which initiates the process of reflection and self-awareness and leads to modifications of theories-in-use, experimentation, and finally, new modes of action.

The case records also contribute to the knowledge base by defining a new role for practitioners. By establishing the importance of and strengthening the foundations of "practical" knowledge, the case records emphasize the integral role of the practitioner in the development of the knowledge base. In so doing, they attract new knowledge and help to bridge the gap between theory and practice.

Typically, we think of knowledge in terms of abstract concepts or ideas. Consistent with our philosophical and scientific heritage, we have created artificial distinctions between theory and practice, idealizing the world of ideas and denigrating the world of practice. Schon (1983, 1987) has questioned the legitimacy of these distinctions and proposed an alternate perspective which once again integrates the worlds of theory and practice and focuses on"knowing-in-

action." Within this framework, knowledge exists in the world of action as much as in the world of ideas. This reconceptualization enables practitioners and academicians to become partners in the development of the knowledge base and eliminates these artificial distinctions between "researchers" and "practitioners", between "theory" and "practice." Within this conceptual framework, case records, which portray the administrator as an intentional actor and explore the interplay between ideas and action, can enhance the knowledge base by generating new knowledge-in-action.

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